13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

changes which are taking place today, a hundred years later, that are finally extinguishing the prehistoric traditions. Mechanization and mass-production are invading the remotest glens, and things which were the commonplaces of fifty years ago are becoming as remote to the young as the Middle Ages. Knowledge of ways of life that have altered little for centuries is passing away; skills whose loss the practical countryman may have cause to regret are disappearing. The Irish Universities have a unique opportunity of fostering local studies and folklore-research, but only University College, Dublin, has seriously supported this work. The Government of Northern Ireland, however, is to be congratulated on having offered to help to finance an Ulster Folk Museum on the lines of St. Fagans in Wales and those of the Scandinavian countries.

Meanwhile the National Museum in Dublin, the Belfast Municipal Museum and the County Museum, Armagh, have been busy collecting and displaying the portable elements of material culture, and I have drawn freely on their exhibits for sketches of objects which it is now too late to find in everyday use. I wish to thank Mr. A. T. Lucas and Dr. J. Raftery, of the National Museum, Mr. W. A. Seaby of the Belfast Museum, and Mr. T. G. F. Paterson of Armagh for their assistance and encouragement. Among many other friends and colleagues whose help I cannot forget are Kevin Danaher and Sean O'Sullivan of the Irish Folklore Commission, Professor Michael Duignan, Professor M. J. O'Kelly, Professor Sean O'Riordain, H. G. Tempest, and Dr. A. E. J. Went; and among my former students R. H. Buchanan, Rosemary Harris, N. C. Mitchel, Dr. D. McCourt, Dr. J. M. Mogey, V. B. Proudfoot and G. B. Thompson. I have to thank the editors of the *Ulster Journal of Archaeology* and of *Ulster Folklife* and Mr. W. A. Seaby for the loan of blocks, and Mr. Seaby also for permission to use several photographs from the collection of the late R. J. Welch. Mr. W. A. Green, Miss H. E. Henry, Mr. Frank Scovell and Mr. C. E. F. Trench have kindly supplied me with photographs. Miss Eileen Duncan has prepared the four maps, and other acknowledgements appear under the text-figures. It is a pleasure also to acknowledge the help received, either orally or in correspondence, from numerous Irishmen in all

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

Introduction

INIS BEAG is a fictitious name for one of the many inhabited islands of the Irish Gaeltacht.[1] It is a rocky, barren protuberance in the ocean, buffeted constantly by wind and storm, where 350 hardy people eke out a meager existence. This tiny island is renowned not only for the distinctive folk culture possessed by its inhabitants, but for its numerous, well-preserved antiquities which attest to at least 5000 years of almost continuous human habitation, and its great beauty of land and seascape. During the past 150 years, first scientists, then writers, and more recently film, radio, and television producers have visited Inis Beag, and their many works have served to familiarize the world with the culture, albeit romanticized, of the islanders. As a result of literary publicity, which commenced in the first decade of this century, increasing numbers of tourists have been drawn to Inis Beag over the years. The cultural forms which are most publicized and attract the most attention from tourists are the traditional garb of the folk, their skill in rowing the famed canoe, called *curach*, the manner in which they manufacture soils and grow in them a variety of crops, and their Gaelic speech.

My wife and I were introduced to Inis Beag during a short visit to Ireland in 1955, when we viewed the island from the nearby coast and talked of its cultural past and present with scholars in Dublin, Cork, and Galway. Between 1955 and 1958, we immersed ourselves in writings pertaining to Irish history and culture, and during the three summer months of the latter year we visited several peasant communities on the mainland and three islands, including Inis Beag, of the Gaeltacht. We made plans to come back to Inis Beag as soon as possible to undertake research, and in 1959 and 1960 we were able to spend the greater part of a year there, during which time we visited briefly on three occasions a neighboring island—Inis Thiar[2]—and several institutions on the mainland to conduct library and other research. We returned eight times to Inis Beag and Dublin for

[1] The Gaeltacht—areas in which 25 to 100 percent of the inhabitants speak Irish—embraces portions of 12 northern, western, and southern counties and a population of approximately 600,000 people (Freeman 1960:166).

[2] In Gaelic, Inis Thiar (also a fictitious name) means Western Isle, and Inis Beag is translated Little Isle.

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visits ranging in length from one to seven weeks between 1961 and 1966 to complete our project. During the 19 months that we dwelled on the island, most of our research was directed toward documenting the contemporary culture of Inis Beag its technological, economic, political, social, religious, esthetic, and recreational aspects. We also investigated informal and formal education and the personality traits created by it, reconstructed Inis Beag history of the past century by examining historical materials of many sorts and probing the memories of elderly respondents, and recorded cultural change in process.

The research techniques that we employed are standard ethnographic ones. the guided and open-ended interview, external and participant observation, collection of life histories, photography, and phonography Two departures from methodological orthodoxy were our use, as projective devices, of literary works and a sixty-two-verse ballad that I composed. A dozen islanders of both sexes and three age groups read at our request three books portraying Inis Beag culture, and we recorded and analyzed their varied responses. My ballad, now embedded in the island folklore tradition, is based on a shipwreck and rescue off Inis Beag that we witnessed, and a series of incidents which ensued during the following months. Alterations made by local singers after it was completed and the reactions to it by the islanders gave us insights into Inis Beag culture and personality which would have been difficult to obtain under other circumstances of fieldwork. I must add that the ballad was a product of exuberant cultural involvement and the satisfactions of "creative endeavor." Its research implications were unanticipated.

The Inis Beag islanders qualify as folk people in almost every respect, according to anthropological definition (Lewis 1960:1): the population has maintained its stability for at least two hundred years; there is a strong bond between the peasants and their land, and agriculture provides them with the major source of their livelihood production is mainly for subsistence and is carried on with a simple technology, which includes as primary implements the digging stick, spade, and scythe the island folk participate in a money economy, but barter still persists; a low standard of living prevails, and the birth rate is high; the family is of central importance, and marriage figures prominently as a provision of economic welfare; the island is integrated into the county and national governments and is subject to their laws; the people long have been exposed to urban influences, have borrowed cultural elements from other rural areas on the mainland, and have integrated them into a relatively stable system; and, finally, the experience of living under foreign rule for over three centuries has created in the islanders an attitude of dependence and, at the same time, one of hostility toward the government which continues to this day. The only conditions in Inis Beag which run counter to those in most other peasant groups are low death and illiteracy rates. The Irish shun the term peasant as applied to individuals or communities, for the same reason that elitists in developing countries eschew the term primitive as applied to traditional cultural forms found in societies incorporated into newly formed states. The causes of this attitude must be examined next.

During the past hundred years, Ireland has experienced a vigorous nativistic movement—provoked by seven centuries of English domination, linked with nationalism as the Irish sought to assert their independence, focused on the

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is a three-story tower house with its south and west walls partially destroyed. The middle story of the castle rests on vaults, and there are carved corbels projecting from the north and east walls. It is believed that the castle was assaulted in 1652 from the land side by Cromwellian troops, who disembarked at the back of the island and hauled their heavy cannons across the limestone pavement, unimpeded by the stone fences which stand today, to the monastery above the tower.

Queen Elizabeth annexed Inis Beag for the Crown in 1586 because of its strategic position, after two contending Irish families had appealed to her following their fierce battle for its possession, in which all of the folk may have been slaughtered. From 1586 until the first decade of the eighteenth century, Commonwealth, Loyalist, and Williamite forces were stationed in Inis Beag most of the time, and until 1886, when obtained by the Irish Land Commission, the island was owned by a succession of absentee Anglo-Irish landlords. When Cromwellian troops forced the surrender of Loyalists in 1652, the population of Inis Beag once again may have been decimated, although one legend holds that only males were put to the sword. The island after 1655 became a port for transshipment of clerics who were exiled to the West Indies. This was the time when Cromwell revenged himself on Irish Catholics and their Protestant allies by appropriating for his followers more than half of the Irish soil and leveling harsh political, commercial, and religious penalties. Thousands of priests were banished, including all of the bishops for a time, in his crusade.

It was after the Restoration in 1660 that the land of Inis Beag was divided into quarters, half-quarters, and smaller units and assigned to families. My genealogical research reveals that all of the families of Inis Beag trace descent from immigrants who arrived in the island during and after the last half of the seventeenth century. The early arrivals, as well as any survivors, may have intermarried and interbred with soldiers posted in the island, for anthropometric and blood group analyses (buttressed by surname and historical evidence and local legend) show that the folk more closely resemble the northern English than they do their mainland cousins. A Dublin humor magazine featured a cartoon, not favored in nativistic quarters, showing Inis Beag men in traditional attire playing cricket.

The islanders still express considerable bitterness over the conditions of poverty and servitude experienced by their ancestors during the 300 years that they lived under alien landlords. All of the excesses of foreign domination suffered by mainland peasants were suffered by Inis Beag folk, but were aggravated by the ordinary hardships of island living. Little is known of local events in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, until the island was "rediscovered" by Petrie and O'Flaherty. There was trading between Inis Beag and communities along the mainland coast for many miles, and ships passing by often dropped anchor at the island; but at that time this region of Ireland was very much isolated and seldom visited. A military garrison once again was established in Inis Beag for a brief period during the Napoleonic Wars, when the English feared an invasion of the British Isles from the west by French forces. A watch tower was constructed on the island, one of a chain along the Atlantic coast of Ireland, to give early warning of invasion.

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Climate

821 Whether or not the steamer calls at Inis Beag, especially during the winter months when severe storms are frequent, is of considerable psychological significance. The importance of weather conditions as they impinge, both directly and [182] indirectly, on this tiny island far out in the ocean cannot be overemphasized. Most [521] activities, and not only farming and fishing, are more or less affected by the [676] climate, and the past, present, and future states of the weather figure prominently in conversations among the folk. It is customary for individuals when meeting to talk first of the weather before turning to other matters, and some of the common greetings pertain to immediate conditions: "It is raining.", "It is windy.", or "It is a beautiful day." These are usually the phrases first mastered by non-Gaelic speakers who spend time in Inis Beag, along with the most used greeting—"God bless you." and its reply, "God and Mary bless you."

132 The year around climate of Inis Beag might be labeled cool, humid, rainy, [127] and windy, at least by one living in the Great Lakes region of the United States. A perusal of lighthouse records for the decade 1951 to 1960 revealed a mean temperature of 42 degrees (all figures Fahrenheit) for the winter months, December to March, and 59 degrees for the summer ones, June to September. During that decade, the lowest and highest temperatures recorded in Inis Beag, both during 1955, were 28 and 80 degrees respectively. January was the coldest month, with a mean temperature of 39 degrees, and July was the warmest, with 61 degrees. The island is located in a climatic zone in which the average rainfall is 40 to 50 inches per year; the average number of rain days per year is 225, and the average June sun hours per day is five and a half.

> Westerly winds predominate in Ireland, though naturally a climate experiencing the passage of so many depressions has winds from every quarter at some time during the year... Winds of gale force are most frequent in the northwest, where they average 40 per year... Most of the gales are from a westerly direction: they are so severe a menace to shipping that many inhabitants of [137] islands and remote coastal districts... profit from periodic salvage hauls... The absence of trees on the exposed western coasts of Ireland is usually regarded as a direct result of the exposure to westerly winds... (Freeman 1960:50–51).

Snow usually falls several times during the winter, but it melts within hours as the temperature seldom fails to climb above freezing on any day. During the months from June to August, the sea and air are often warm enough to encourage 821 "comfortable" swimming by tourists, usually off the strand. The islanders consider May the ideal month so far as climate is concerned, for the weather tends to be cool, dry, and windy; flowers grow in profusion and birds return in great numbers. March weather, which is much colder but also dry and windy, is called "hard."

All of the adults of Inis Beag are amateur weather forecasters; however, [815] several old men are considered to be specialists in the art. Some households possess [207] barometers, and forecasts on the radio are listened to attentively by those who own sets. But, in the main, the folk prefer to make their own prognostications based on traditional signs, most of which are sound meteorologically and the outgrowth of

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are those who are either indifferent to the rapid increase in emigration since 1946, or welcome it. The island has its bitter critics, even among a few of the oldest generation who regret not having emigrated when they had the opportunity. A noted craftsman, long disillusioned with island existence, is refusing to train any of his sons to carry on the family tradition of generations. English is spoken as much as Irish in the presence of children in some households so as to prepare them for eventual emigration, in spite of the protestations of some priests and neighbors who insist that the alien tongue not be spoken on moral and nativistic grounds. The language revival movement receives much criticism because it results in emigrants being placed at a disadvantage; a frequently heard utterance in Inis Beag, even among those who hesitate to use English before their offspring, is, "What good will Irish do a person?" It is customary now for emigrating youths with inadequate command of English to spend three months to a year in a mainland community—with relatives or at a job—before going on to England or America. On the mainland, they also overcome some of their shyness and feelings of inferiority and become acquainted with Western customs absent from Inis Beag.

Islanders Abroad

My wife and I obtained some emigration statistics for the siblings of all folk now living in Inis Beag. For 289 persons who emigrated between 1891 and 1958, we assembled accurate data on: community settled in abroad, occupation, marriage age, place of origin and religion of spouse, and number of offspring. Of these 289, 4.8 percent went to neighboring islands, mostly to marry; 28.0 percent to the mainland (permanently rather than to prepare for emigration from Ireland); 42.8 percent to the United States; 22.8 percent to England; 1.0 percent to Australia; and 0.6 percent to Canada and other countries. The shift of emigration from the United States to England after the Second World War is revealed by the following statistics: between 1891 and 1945, 72.4 percent of Inis Beag emigrants went to the United States and only 10.6 percent to England; but between 1946 and 1958, emigration to the United States dropped to 25.5 percent, while to England it increased to 45.1 percent. The fact that before 1946 approximately 16 percent of the islanders who emigrated remained in Ireland as compared to 28 percent after that date attests to the increasing properity in their homeland as well as abroad.

It is beyond the scope of this work to follow Inis Beag emigrants of the past and present to their destinations abroad and beyond; the causes, conditions, and consequences of emigration from Ireland to America and England are amply documented in such standard works as Cecil Woodham-Smith's *The Great Hunger*, George W. Potter's *To the Golden Door*, William V. Shannon's *The American Irish*, Arnold Schrier's *Ireland and the American Emigration*, and John A. Jackson's *The Irish in Britain*. But, in closing chapter and book, I would like to discuss two additional sets of statistics which have an important bearing on Inis Beag culture and personality and which, as far as I know, have never been compiled systematically for any body of emigrants from a particular locality of Ireland. One